

Population And Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee (Scotland)

Scotland's Census 2021 – Update for PAMS May 2019 Introduction

Work continues towards Scotland's Census 2021 and our Census Rehearsal. Since the last PAMS meeting in November we have been building on 'Plans for Scotland's Census 2021' which were published on Thursday 27 September 2018.

1. Questions

Question development is largely complete for Census 2021. The Census (Amendment) Scotland Bill is proceeding, with the aim of proposed Trans Status and sexual orientation questions being included as voluntary questions. This parliamentary process has put a focus on the sex question proposed in Scotland's Plans for Census 2021, and as a result NRS are undertaking further engagement and development on the is question. In addition, there is further investigation of potential age limits on the trans status question.

While the need for data has been established, and questions developed to gather that data have been developed, Scotland's Census 2021 will be digital first. The digital first approach for 2021 requires further development and user testing to fully understand the best way to present the questions online to maximise response, minimise respondent burden and ensure good quality data which meets user needs. NRS are in a process of ongoing user research and testing which will inform the online questionnaire, including how questions are formatted. For example, testing has demonstrated collecting qualifications held in four questions, focused on school qualifications, further education, apprenticeships, and higher education and professional qualifications improved respondent experience and data quality. Limitations in designing the paper form meanwhile the same data is collected across the whole population, the digital first approach can be harnessed to improve data quality.

Overall, most questions are not changing the data being collected. Some improvements to improve data quality such as guidance, examples in questions have been suggested. In summary: -

- We have recommended new questions on
 - Trans status / history
 - Sexual orientation
 - Use of British Sign Language
 - Passport held
 - Veterans/ex-service status
- Change to the English Language questions to collect both skills and proficiency.
- Inclusion of levels of apprenticeship in the Qualifications held question
- Inclusion of Roma and Showperson in the ethnic group question, and a prompt for Jewish. In addition, the African and Caribbean or Black response options have changed to write in responses to meet need for more granular data on these groups.
- Inclusion of District or communal heat system in the central heating question

- Collapse of the land lord response options to Council / Housing association or RSL; Private landlord or agency ; other.
- Changes to the tenure response options to reflect prevalence of tenure, reflecting changes in government housing policy since 2011.
- Changes to the wording of the Main Language question – now asks for main language rather than language used at home. This aligns with the question used in other censuses across the UK, and testing demonstrated no impact on the data collected.
- Inclusion of a new response option for Full or partial loss of voice or difficulty speaking, in response to SG legislative introduced since 2011.
- Inclusion of a Pagan response option in the religion question, and a prompt to gather more granular data on those identifying as Muslim in the religion question.
- There are changes to the wording of the labour market questions, to improve respondent understanding. These do not change the data collected. The two changes to labour market questions which introduce a change are the Have you ever done any paid work – the definition of long term unemployed now aligns with that used in the Labour Force Survey(LFS), which users identified as a high need. The hours worked question has changed to banded response options rather than a write in. This has no impact on the standard outputs, as the 2011 data was output in banded hours.
- There have been changes to the address of place of work or study, to improve the data quality. Online, previous questions will be used to identify those who work full time, or study full time. In these cases the respondent will be asked to complete the relevant address. Where there is no information to understand if a respondent predominantly works or studies, the 2011 question will be presented.

The rehearsal question set to be used in rehearsal is attached in **Annex A** for information. This is the Question set to be used in rehearsal testing only. See separate document. Note that this is a working draft and changes may be made.

2. Legislation

As previously mentioned the purpose of the Census (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill is to make answering census questions on sexual orientation and transgender status and history voluntary. The Bill was laid before Parliament on 2 October 2018.

- The Stage 1 report was published 7th February 2019 and was followed by a Stage 1 debate on 28 February in Parliament. All parties supported the principals of the Bill although several points were raised in line with the content of the Stage 1 report – namely around the potential conflation of sex and gender identity; and some issues with stakeholder engagement, in particular with what the report had termed ‘newly formed women’s groups’.
- We submitted a series of Amendments in agreement with the Cabinet Secretary on 3rd of April to address the questions raised before embarking on Stage 2 of the process.
- Stage 2 is underway with Stage 3 expected to start in June and Royal Assent planned for July 2019.

Over the rest of this year we will be starting to engage with Parliament for the Census Order and Regulations which will be laid next year 2020 which will set out the final questions and arrangements for the census in 2021.

3. Other work

We are continuing to develop our plans for rehearsal and how we will test our systems and services before we get to 2021. We have set up meetings with all local authorities to talk through plans for census and for rehearsal and this engagement will continue going forward.

Use of Administrative Data, looking to 2021 and beyond, we are keen to expand the use that we make of administrative data in the collection, production and quality assurance of population statistics. We contributed to an event on 29 April with our colleagues in demographic statistics. This was a roundtable event to help shape future developments to migration statistics. An ambitious programme of work to transform international migration statistics through greater use of administrative data as well as understand how this fits into the broader population statistics system.

4. Contact us / Get involved

Details of events and workshops we have planned are available on our Scotland's Census website. We always welcome feedback on the work we have taken forward so far, please email us at: scotlandscensus@nrscotland.gov.uk with feedback, queries or comments.

To stay in touch we recommend that you subscribe to Scotland's Census Mailchimp newsletter to keep up to date with all the latest updates from Scotland's Census 2021.

Comments, feedback and queries are invited from the PAMS group.

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Scotland's Census 2021 Programme National Records of Scotland

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